

Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
April 23, 2013 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman
Brian J. Burket, Vice Chairman
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office

Others present:

Gregg A. Bogia, Bogia Engineering Inc.
Justin W. Brewer, Ludgate Engineering Corporation
Alan W. Shuman, Shuman Development Group Inc. (Kutzfactory LP)
Carole Duran, Reading Eagle Company

Chairman Raffaelli called the April meeting to order, reminded presenters to sign the attendance sheet, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Lauter moved to accept the April 23rd agenda. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the April agenda.

219 Buttonwood Land Development (Dollar General) – final land development plan [0:00.37]

Mr. Bogia said he had obtained a zoning permit since the March presentation, thinking it the last major hurdle to approval. Mr. Miller asked about the Berks County Conservation District's review. Mr. Bogia expected their approval shortly, explaining that the project is also subject to a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit due to its total area of disturbance. Asked for building elevations, Mr. Bogia produced some photographs of a prototype store. Mr. Bealer asked about the gate to Beech Street requested by the Fire Marshal. Mr. Bogia indicated its location on the plan. Asked if there were any other issues, Mr. Miller repeated the need for the Conservation District's approval of the erosion and sedimentation controls. He referred to the procedural requirements of the land development ordinance, while acknowledging an otherwise complete plan. He said they must grant preliminary approval, at a minimum, to meet the Municipalities Planning Code deadline, and deservedly since the zoning permit had been issued. Mr. Bogia characterized the technical nature of certain deficiencies cited by the Conservation District, and said they missed their own deadline. He mentioned the plan sets sealed, and already delivered to the Planning Office. Mr. Miller said he'd have to hold the plans, at least, and wasn't sure how to advise the Commission vis-à-vis final approval. He asked about the unsigned ownership certificate, and the separate post-construction stormwater plan. Asked if he had any issues with the Planning Office review, Mr. Bogia said not.

Mr. Bealer moved to grant preliminary plan approval, tabling the final action until the requisite permits are issued. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to grant preliminary approval of the Dollar General plan.

Resolution #8-2013

Kutztown Road Retail – final subdivision and land development plan [0:10.18]

Mr. Shuman thought the issues raised at the March meeting had been resolved, including the Conservation District's approval. He offered samples of the façade materials, intended to match the existing building: brick, stucco and steel siding. He noted some masonry block planned on the sides and rear that differs slightly. Mr. Brewer showed building elevations. Mr. Shuman explained there are technically six different bays/spaces: Berks County took one-and-a-half, doctors relocating their offices from Albright College's Rockland Center will consolidate their practices in two-and-a-half more, a Subway restaurant reserved another, leaving one space available. A wrought-iron fence will restrict access to the four-foot space between the buildings, through which will run connections for the irrigation piping. The County space includes the Berks office of the Pennsylvania CareerLink service, moving from its current location on Crescent Avenue, together with 20,000 square feet to be occupied in the renovated existing building. He said the lease saves the County almost \$100,000 a year and in a fully-ADA-compliant building. He said a consolidating deed was recorded in March. Mr. Miller confirmed the erosion and sedimentation control plan approval. He said the only permit outstanding is a highway-occupancy permit for the utility connection, a formality, and a process that the City Engineer feels will sufficiently cover the minor 'municipal improvements' necessary as well. He suggested a final approval, with conditions.

Mr. Lauter moved to approve the final plan, conditioned on satisfying the remaining items cited in the latest Planning Office review. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to approve the Kutztown Road Retail final plan.

Resolution #9-2013

Other business:

§508.3 agreement to extension-Humane Society Building Addition [0:20.50]

Mr. Miller read from a letter by DH Enterprises Inc. offering a 90-day extension on behalf of the Humane Society. He explained that their plan requires a zoning appeal, for which they had only recently made application to the Zoning Administrator.

Mr. Burket moved to accept the 90-day extension, as requested in the April 22nd letter from the applicant's engineer. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to extend its review of the "Humane Society Building Addition" plan by 90 days, per the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code's time limits (§508.3) for plan review.

Resolution #10-2013

§603.c.2 conditional use review-912 Amity Street (conversion) [0:22.30]

Mr. Miller explained that City Council had denied the previous application, suggesting that the applicant remedy some violations and 'try again'. He believed the applicant sought permits retroactively, for the work previously done without authorization. Mr. Burket suggested those developments wouldn't warrant any change in the Planning Commission's original position.

Mr. Burket moved to recommend City Council approve the application on the same basis and test as the Planning Commission's recommendation of November 27, 2012 (no. 30-2012). Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to reiterate their recommendations in City Council's consideration of 912 Amity Street, at a hearing scheduled for May 7th.

Resolution #11-2013

§603.c.2 conditional use review-1146 North 6th Street (conversion) [0:25.54]

Mr. Miller said he was less familiar with this case, having paraphrased most of his written comments from the report of the Zoning Office. He recognized a larger structure than many others seeking a 'two-unit' status. He hadn't discussed the property with the building inspectors directly, but understood the basement space would be incorporated into the first-floor apartment. It would require a dramatic alteration to make the basement a legal dwelling in itself. Mr. Burket noted that there appeared to be ample on-street parking in the neighborhood. Mr. Lauter assumed there'd be various inspections along the way of the renovation. Mr. Miller agreed, and distributed copies of the application, floor plans and photographs. Asked about the use of the second floor space above the garage, Mr. Miller wasn't sure but assumed it to either be made part of the second-floor apartment or reserved as utility/mechanical space. He felt that the kind of question that could be resolved at the City Council hearing. Discussion on the floor plans continued.

Mr. Burket moved to recommend City Council approve the application for two units, contingent on all necessary architectural plan approvals, permits and inspections. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to forward that recommendation for City Council's consideration of 1146 North 6th Street, at a hearing scheduled for May 7th.

Resolution #12-2013

§303.a.1 review-petition to vacate Moss Street, in its 1800 block (Reading Area Water Authority) [0:41.09]

Mr. Miller characterized the matter as a decision effectively made by a prior action of City Council. He said the Municipalities Planning Code requires the Planning Commission's review. The City Engineer's memorandum only made the usual comments about protecting City-owned utilities. A 1996 land development plan for the former A&A Auto Store (the building now occupied by the Water Authority) suggests that it was vacated at that time, and the building placed within its width.

Mr. Lauter moved to recommend Moss Street be vacated as described in the Water Authority's March 29th petition, based on: (1) the ordinance modifying "the lease and operating agreement" between the City and the Water Authority (Bill No. 36-2012, June 11 2012), (2) observed site conditions, and (3) the reservation of any easements necessary to protect and access utilities remaining within the former right-of-way. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to forward the recommendation.

Resolution #13-2013

review the draft March 26, 2013 meeting minutes [0:44.22]

Mr. Bealer suggested a couple grammatical corrections. Mr. Lauter moved to accept the March meeting minutes, with the requested edits. Mr. Burket seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the corrected March 26th meeting minutes.

Resolution #14-2013

Mr. Bealer gave a brief update on the Blighted Property Review Committee's recent activity.

Mr. Miller reminded that the Commission should elect its officers at the May meeting, as stipulated in the by-laws, a procedure forgotten in 2012.

Mr. Burket moved to adjourn the April meeting. Mr. Lauter seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the April 23rd meeting. – 7:55p